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SUBJECT: KAZAKH DCM COMMENTS ON TRADE AND BORDER ISSUES
WITH UZBEKISTAN

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY DCM BRAD HANSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Kazakh Foreign Minister Tokaev did not meet with any Uzbek officials during his February 8 visit to Tashkent. The majority of ethnic Kazakhs in Uzbekistan live along the border between the two countries, but require a visa to cross the border. While there is some cross-border trade, GOU import restrictions make it difficult for most Uzbeks to purchase products from Kazakhstan. End summary.

¶2. (C) Kazakh DCM Kyzyr Jumabaev told DCM that Foreign Minister Kassymzhomart Tokaev, in Tashkent on February 8 to participate in a meeting to select the location for the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC), did not meet bilaterally with any Uzbek officials. (Note: According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which sponsored the meeting, Uzbek Foreign Minister Ganiev chose not to meet with any of the visiting ministers. End note.) When DCM asked about Kazakh-Uzbek relations, Jumabaev would not characterize them other than simply stating &we are neighbors.8 Jumabaev confirmed that President Nazarbaev is scheduled to visit Tashkent at the end of March, but the agenda for the visit is still being discussed. Recent press reports state that Nazarbaev will visit March 19-20. Discussion topics will include expanding economic, humanitarian and cultural cooperation (septel). For the region, Jumabaev hopes that cooperation among Central Asian states will jump start preventing the smuggling of nuclear material, narcotics and terrorists. (Note: CARICC is intended to enhance information sharing among Central Asian countries on narcotics trafficking issues. At least initially, it will not attempt to deal with proliferation or terrorism issues. End note.)

¶3. (C) One of Kazakhstan,s largest borders is shared with Uzbekistan, along which are three major crossing points: Chrenayavka, Koplonbek and Mayskiy. Jumabayev estimated one million ethnic Kazakhs live in Uzbekistan, mostly along this border. Jumabaev recently spent one day observing border crossings at Chrenayavka (aka Gishtuprik), where he and his assistant counted approximately 10,000 persons crossing each way. (Comment: These numbers seem a bit exaggerated, based on Embassy staff's own occasional observation of this most important border crossing, just 45 minutes north of downtown Tashkent. Kazakhs and Uzbeks are able to cross the border without visas. End comment.)

¶4. (C) While Jumabaev did not have exact figures on trade, he said Kazakhstan exports mostly flour, dairy products and light manufacturing goods to Uzbekistan. Kazakh flour is considered higher quality with high gluten content. However, the GOU,s import restrictions and tariffs make it difficult

for Uzbeks to buy many Kazakh products. Flour is often smuggled across the border in small amounts. Uzbekistan exports fruits and vegetables to Kazakhstan. Only a small amount of natural gas is purchased from Uzbekistan as the GOU has imposed tight price controls.

15. (C) Comment: Jumabaev, about 55-60 years old, is a former manager of a collective-farm in northern Kazakhstan, near Azkul north of Astana. He is not a professional diplomat, but has worked seven years working at the Kazakh Embassy in Tashkent. His primary job appears to be Consul, only filling in for the Ambassador secondarily. End comment.

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